

Developments

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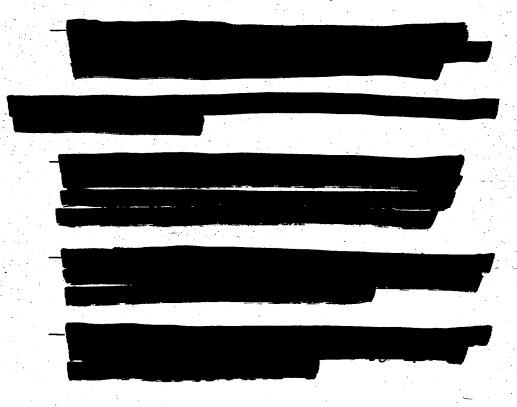
CUBA:

Preparing for the Flotilla

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The government is taking a cautious approach to today's flotilla in an effort to offset some of the damage done by its shootdown of two civilian aircraft last Saturday.

- Foreign Minister Robaina yesterday publicly said Cuba will act with "utmost restraint to avoid any new incidents." Havana, he said, wants to avoid "an escalation promoted by the Cuban-American right wing," continuing the theme that Cuban-US citizens, not the US Government, are chiefly responsible for increased tension.
- A Foreign Ministry official announced on Thursday that Havana would view the flotilla's presence below the 24th parallel—Cuba's Air Defense Identification Zone—as a "provocation" but would take no action if it remained in international waters and airspace. Havana appears to be preparing to claim credit for restraint evenif the flotilla never enters Cuban territory.



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SC 00051/96 2 March 1996

Special Analysis

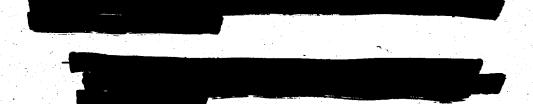
CUBA:

Behind the Shootdown

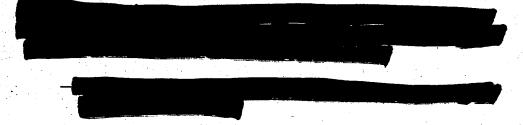
Havana

ordered the destruction of the two US-registered civilian aircraft last Saturday.

- Last July, President Castro described the group's first leaflet drop over Havana as an "extraordinary provocation," adding that Cuba's patience could well be exhausted. The Foreign Ministry issued a warning that, if additional territorial violations occurred, intruding boats could be sunk and aircraft shot down.
- Another leaflet drop over Havana in mid-January



Weighing the Risks



— At home, the economy is beginning to recover from an economic contraction of 35 percent following the cutoff of Soviet aid in 1989.

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Top Secret

As it demonstrated last week in cracking down on the umbrella group Cuban Council, the government has kept dissidents marginalized and off-balance through infiltration, harassment, and imprisonment.

The Castro government doubtless anticipated a negative US reaction to the shootdown, but it seems to have been taken aback by the vehemence of Washington's response and the widespread international condemnation of Cuba's behavior.

 National Assembly President Alarcon and Foreign Minister Robaina were uncharacteristically unprepared while presenting their cases

Limiting the Damage

At this point, Havana is trying to forestall any international sanctions and to do what it can to put the incident behind it.

— By painting Brothers to the Rescue as a rogue organization, the Castro government is trying to improve its international image and to put pressure on the US to impose stronger restraints on the group's activities.

